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ON A GREEN HERON *BUTORIDES VIRESCENS* SPECIMEN AT A MUSEUM IN MADEIRA

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With 1 table and 2 figures

RESUMO. Um espécime de Socó-mirim *Butorides virescens* foi encontrado em exposição no Museu do Jardim Botânico do Funchal numa colecção pertencente ao Seminário do Funchal. Apesar de não apresentar etiquetas indicando local ou data de captura, a sua captura no Arquipélago da Madeira é claramente a hipótese mais provável, constituindo este o primeiro registo para a região. A sua origem e data de colheita possível são discutidas.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Padre Ernesto Schmitz, *Butorides virescens*, divagante, museu, espécime, Madeira, Neárctico, primeiro registo.

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ABSTRACT. One Green Heron *Butorides virescens* specimen was found in an exposition at the Museu do Jardim Botânico do Funchal, in a collection belonging to the Seminário do Funchal. Although not bearing any tags indicating locality or date of capture, its Madeiran origin is clearly the most likely hypothesis, being this the first record for the region. Its origin and possible collection date are discussed.

KEY WORDS: Padre Ernesto Schmitz, *Butorides virescens*, vagrant, museum, specimen, Nearctic, first record.

The Green Heron *Butorides virescens* is a small wading bird from the New World, breeding in North and Central America, and wintering mostly from southern North America to northern South America. This species is a very rare vagrant to Europe and the Azores (ALSTRÖM *et al.*, 1991; CLARKE, 2006) (Table 1). There are no published records for Madeira.

In 2007, while conducting a review of the bird specimens kept at the Museu do Jardim Botânico do Funchal (in order to produce a catalogue), one Green Heron specimen in first winter plumage was found amongst the collection. Although the identification was obvious, this specimen had no tags indicating either species or place or date of collection.

The whole bird collection kept at the Museu do Jardim Botânico do Funchal is property of the Diocese of Funchal (see MATIAS, 2009). The oldest specimen in the collection, a Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*, dates from 1844. However, most specimens were collected during the period when Padre Ernesto Schmitz was responsible for the collection, from 1882 to 1908 (when he left Madeira), and were then part of the Museu do Seminário do Funchal; some specimens are more recent, indicating bird collection still continued after that period, although evidently at a much slower pace.

BANNERMAN & BANNERMAN (1965) failed to find the collection of the Seminário do Funchal and assumed all specimens had been destroyed (see MATIAS, 2009, for details). That explains why those authors (and others) never detected this specimen. This collection has been housed at the Museu do Jardim Botânico since 1982 and, thus, this specimen remained apparently undetected for 25 years from the date it became available to the public.

TABLE 1 - Published records of Green Heron in Europe. Note that all French and Dutch records refer to one single individual that migrated annually between two locations, summering in the Netherlands and wintering in France (thus are counted as one). Also, the Irish record relates to the same individual as the British record for 2005. There are no records published for the Canary Islands. Records signaled with "*" were not yet evaluated by the relevant rarities committees.

#	Area	Location	Date	Age	Reference
01*	I. AZORES	Ponta Delgada, S. Miguel	24.10.1978	Adult	Le GRAND, 1983
02*		Lajes, Flores	19-26.10.1979	1st winter	Den HARTOG & LAVALEYE, 1981; Le GRAND, 1993
03*		Mosteiros, S. Miguel	17.10.1985	Adult	PARROT *et al.*, 1987; Le GRAND, 1993
04*		Lajes do Pico, Pico	22-24.10.1985	Immature	PARROT *et al.*,1987; Le GRAND, 1993
05*		Sete Cidades, S. Miguel	10.09.1998	2nd year	CLARKE, 1999
06*		Sete Cidades, S. Miguel	30.09.1998	1st year	CLARKE, 1999
07*		Santa Cruz, Flores	21.10.2000	1st winter	ANON., 2000
08		Porto de Ponta Delgada, São Miguel	27.11.2006	1st winter	R. BISPO *in* JARA *et al.*, 2008
09	II. UNITED KINGDOM	Cornwall, England	27.10.1889	Immature	FRASER *et al.*, 2007
10		Humberside, England	27.11-6.12.1982	Adult	FRASER *et al.*, 2007
11		Lothian, Scotland	25.10.1987	1st winter, dead	FRASER *et al.*, 2007
12		Jersey and Guernsey, Channel Islands	17.08-early October 1992	Immature	ROGERS *et al.*, 1994
13		Lincolnshire, England	September-October 2001	Immature	FRASER *et al.*, 2007
14		Anglesey, Wales	07-20.11.2005	1st winter	FRASER *et al.*, 2007
15		Kent, England	19.10-09.11.2008	1st winter	HUDSON *et al.*, 2009
16*		Cornwall, England	06.10-01.12.2010	1st winter	BIRDGUIDES, 2010
14	III. IRELAND	Schull, Co. Cork	11-13.10.2005	1st winter	FRASER *et al.*, 2007
17	IV. NETHERLANDS	De Nieuwe Meer, Amsterdam	25.04-30.09.2006	2nd year	van der VLIET *et al.*, 2007; OVAA *et al.*, 2008, 2009
		De Nieuwe Meer, Amsterdam	31.05-18.07.2007	3rd year	OVAA *et al.*, 2008, 2009
		De Nieuwe Meer, Amsterdam	25.05-19.07.2009	Adult	OVAA *et al.*, 2009, 2010
17	V. FRANCE	Berre-l'Etang, Bouches-du-Rhône	16.12.2006-02.05.2007	2nd-3rd year	REEBER *et al.*, 2009
		Berre-l'Etang, Bouches-du-Rhône	31.10.2007-04.05.2008	3rd year - Adult	REEBER *et al.*, 2009
		Berre-l'Etang, Bouches-du-Rhône	08.11.2008-06.05.2009	Adult	REEBER *et al.*, 2009; OVAA *et al.*, 2010
18	VI. ICELAND	S Iceland	29.10.2001	-, shot	KOLBEISSON, 2004
19		SE Iceland	28.05-mid July 2004	Adult	KOLBEISSON, 2004

Fig. 1. - Green Heron from Madeira (MADS-a063). A - Right side view; B - Left side view.

Fig. 2. - Green Heron from Madeira (MADS-a063). Detail of left side of the head.

Specimen description

This specimen features all diagnostic characteristics of a Green Heron in first winter plumage (Figs. 1-2). While retaining some juvenile feathers (the whole wings), it has already moulted most or all body feathers, which are now similar to adult feathers (Fig. 1). All retained juvenile feathers are also quite fresh. Its plumage and bare parts can be described as follows:

1. Upperparts: on the head, a green-glossed blackish-brown cap (starting at the front) that extends to a short crest towards the nape and neck (Fig. 2). Neck and cheeks reddish-brown, extends towards the underparts, deeper in colour in the rear part and striated with a paler (whitish) tone in the frontal part and chest (created by whitish edges to the lower neck feathers). White throat. Dark line below the eyes coming from the base of the bill. Thin pale line on the upper lores. Scapulars fresh, long and thin with a clear almost metallic green gloss.

2. Underparts: similar in colour to the neck but less reddish. Reddish-brown thigh feathers.

3. Wings: plumage still that of a juvenile, unmoulted. Dark-grey coverts with buffish-white drop-shaped terminal spots. Lesser upperwing coverts with fresh buffish-brown edges. Greater secondary coverts with clear buffish-white edges. Exposed primaries dark with thin white terminal tips (Fig. 1).

4. Bare parts: not painted, remaining as in the original specimen. Bill orangy-yellow with dark brown culmen. Legs and feet yellowish-brown.

It was given the collection number MADS-a063.

Possible origin of the specimen

The main problem in accepting this specimen as the first record for Madeira is not its identification, but its origin, due to the fact that it does not bear any original tags. The most probable explanation for its provenance, however, is that it was genuinely collected in the Madeira archipelago, as are all other specimens in this collection, although at an unknown locality.

On this Green Heron specimen, a green plastic label (not original) on the wooden support where the specimen stands can be read as “MADS INCOMPLETA”. This means it is a specimen from the Seminary of Funchal collection (MADS), but for which no additional information existed when the new labels were produced. This specimen is mounted in quite the same fashion as all other specimens.

All specimens but one on which the locality of collection can still be read on the original tag (340 specimens) were captured in Madeira region (Madeira, Porto Santo or Desertas); the single exception is one White-faced Storm-petrel *Pelagodroma marina*, which

originated in the Selvagens Islands. These tags are the original ones, with green plastic labels having been added at a much later stage, possibly just before the specimens were moved to the Jardim Botânico (in 1981-82). Among the minority of specimens that do not bear any tag (18), 6 are Madeiran breeding birds (local subspecies), reinforcing the idea that all specimens are from Madeira; while some seem to have the tag missing (lost, eaten off by insects, etc), others, apparently more recent, seemingly never had any tag. This suggests that on some specimens work was still in progress, with tagging never having been accomplished, which I believe to be the case with this Green Heron. Given the above facts, it seems highly unlikely that a collection locality can be other than the Madeira archipelago.

Possible date of collection of the specimen

As stated above, the oldest specimen in the collection dates from 1844. The most recent specimen that bears a tag was collected in 1948. In Schmitz's writings there is no mention of a Green Heron or of any strange heron that could be confused with this specimen. As the specimens collected during the "Schmitz period" are all mentioned in literature, we can therefore be assured that this bird was collected after 1908. My personal belief is that it is likely to have been collected during the last "wave" of specimens brought into the collection, during the late 1930s or 1940s. The fact that Sarmento (1936, 1948) does not mention this species in his book on the birds of Madeira (although he does mention some other specimens added to this collection from the "after-Schmitz" period) suggests the date of collection is after 1936 (as his work from 1948 is a re-edition of the 1936 inventory). In fact, the date of collection is probably after 1948, as a checklist produced by G. E. Maul and included in the 1948 book also does not mention the Green Heron.

The implications from the fact that the specimen is in first winter plumage are that it was probably collected before the spring of its second year of life. The freshness of its whole plumage further suggests placing the date within the first calendar year of life (*i. e.* before the end of December). In this context, most records of this species in Europe are from October (Alström *et al.*, 1991) (Table 1).

In conclusion, from the above, it seems quite safe finally to acknowledge this specimen as the first record of a Green Heron in Madeira.

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B O C A G I A N A

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NOTES ON TWO MADEIRA PLANTS

By N. C. H. Krauss [1]

The composite plant «Abundância» (*Eupatorium adenophorum* Spreng.) has been known in Madeira for many years. On July 24, 1962 I collected a second species of *Eupatorium*, *E. riparium* Schultz-Bip., confirmed by the Royal Botanic Garden, Kew, England. This was growing in association with *E. adenophorum* in a damp area along a path near Monte. Both these species of *Eupatorium* are native to Mexico. I have seen *E. riparium* growing along a small stream in a ravine at the Desierto de los Leones, Distrito Federal, in the hills above Mexico City. Both species are pests in grazing land in Hawaii.

On November 7, 1960 I collected specimens of *Ulex minor* Roth (determined by Royal Botanic Garden, Kew) in the grassy hills above Ribeiro Frio. Since then I have seen it also at Encumeada and Santo da Serra. *Ulex europaeus* L. has been known in Madeira for a long time, but I have not seen any records of *U. minor*.

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